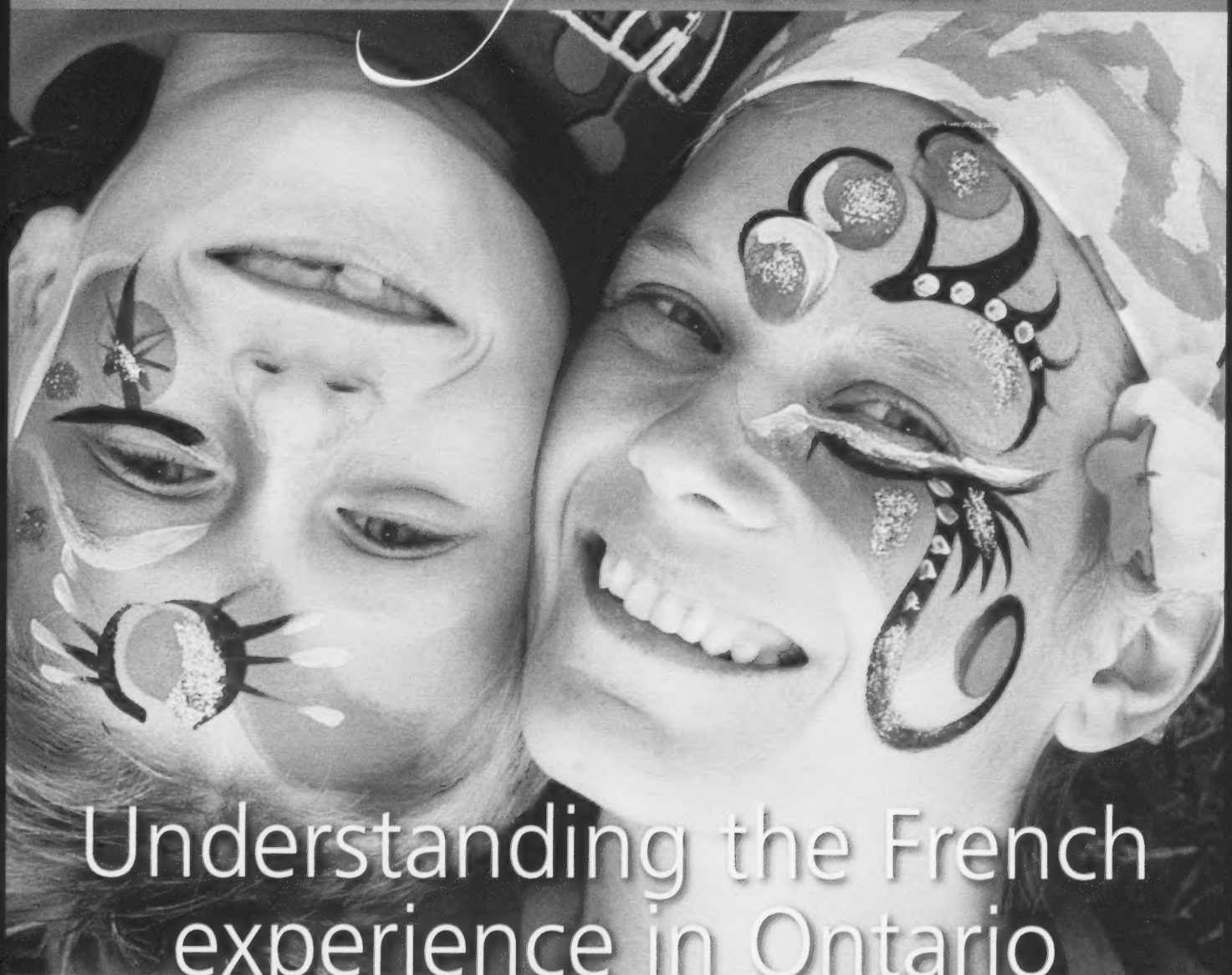
ONTARIO HERITAGE TRUST

BRINGING OUR STORY TO LIFE

Heritage Matters

A publication of the Ontario Heritage Trust May 2012



Understanding the French experience in Ontario

In this issue:

The early French presence in Ontario | Developing communities
Prayers, petitions and protests | Portrait of a growing diversity

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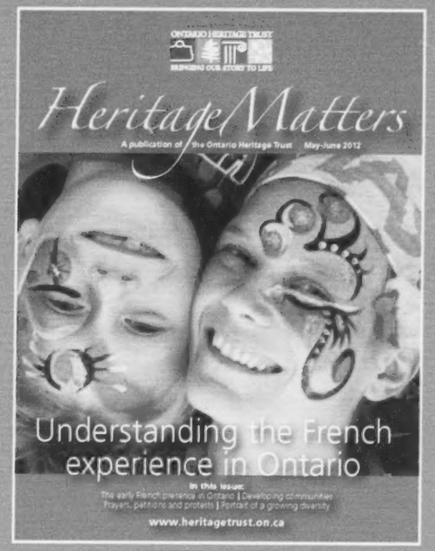
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Ontario

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Cover Image: Photo: Sylvain Marier, from the Festival franco-ontarien

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A message from the Chairman: Ontario's Quiet Revolution

The role of French-speaking people in shaping the history and life of this province reaches back to the early 17th century, when explorers and missionaries embarked on official journeys of reconnaissance and faith.

By the time Upper Canada was created in 1791, the relationship of French-speaking people to the province was well established, and recognized in some of its earliest legislation. In fact, a resolution acknowledging French-language rights in Upper Canada was adopted at Newark as early as June 1793.

This view of the importance of language to the French-speaking population – and to the identity of the province as a whole – was shared by those creating a pre-Confederation educational framework for the province. Indeed, Dr. Egerton Ryerson, the Chief Superintendent of Education in the province for more than 30 years, took the view that French was, as well as English, one of the recognized languages of the province, and that children could therefore be taught in either language in its public schools.

In the almost 100 years, however, from Confederation until Ontario's own Quiet Revolution in the 1960s, French-speaking people in the province were faced with heavy and real pressures to assimilate, stemming in large part from an assumption that assimilation was both desirable and possible. This assumption significantly influenced the thinking of virtually every provincial administration from the time of Confederation and was supported by a broader movement in English Canada intended to restrict or eliminate altogether the use of French language. Even the passionate opposition of Sir John A. Macdonald, who denounced the movement in the House of Commons in 1890, did little to quell its momentum.

In spite of legislative and other efforts to eliminate the use of French language in the province, the French fact would not go away. This reality was acknowledged by modest gains in education during the period between the First and Second World Wars that culminated in the 1960s during a period of substantive reform.

Indeed, the 1960s saw numerous and profound reforms and innovations – a revolution in regard to the position of Ontario's francophone citizens and the rights and opportunities available to them, particularly in the areas of education and language.

The passing of French language school legislation in 1969 was accompanied by a growing recognition of the part played in the history and life of the province by the Franco-Ontarian community. Premier John Robarts acknowledged and supported this fact when he stated, "Men and women of French origin have played a significant role in the development of Ontario for more than three centuries … This role continues today through the Franco-Ontarian community … Its strength, vitality, accomplishments and potential are immense. Ontario – indeed all of Canada – is far the richer and stronger for the presence of these French-speaking residents."

Since the 1960s, we have witnessed further legislative reforms, the strengthening of the Franco-Ontarian identity through education at all levels, literature and the arts, and the creation of cultural symbols. This strengthening of identity has enhanced individual rights and educational and cultural opportunities for all Ontarians.

As we embark on the second decade of the 21st century, we are witnessing an ongoing evolution in francophone Ontario that is a significant part of the province's changing cultural, social and linguistic landscape, resulting in a more diverse community. This change presents exciting opportunities, as well as new challenges, both of which will inform and enrich our understanding of the French experience in Ontario.

Tom Symons

Thomas H.B. Symons, CC, O.Ont., FRSC, LLD

An interview with Madeleine Meilleur

Recently, the Ontario Heritage Trust sat down with Madeleine Meilleur – Ontario's Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, and the Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs. Her remarkable story is firmly rooted in her French-Canadian heritage. She is clearly confident that Ontario's francophone identity – despite, or perhaps because of, the changes and challenges experienced by Franco-Ontarians – is as strong as ever and continues to play a significant role in the future of Ontario.

Ontario Heritage Trust: Could you talk a little bit about your family history and explain how your family came to live in Ontario.

Madeleine Meilleur: Actually, my family comes from a little town in Quebec, called Kiamika, in the Upper Laurentians. I grew up there with my parents, one brother and five sisters, and I go back often to visit my family. My father spoke only French, but thought more doors would open for his children if they learned English as well. So, he encouraged us from a very young age to open up our horizons – especially to learn English.

I wanted to work in health care, and knowing I could study nursing at Montfort Hospital, I left Quebec at the age of 17 to go into that program.

The experience of studying and working at Montfort – the hospital that became such a powerful symbol for the Franco-Ontarian community – left a lasting impression on me.

Even though my family is from Quebec – and those roots are important to me – I think of myself as a fully-fledged Franco-Ontarian. For me, Ontario is not only where I live, it's where I studied, where I have had my career, and where I have the privilege of being elected to represent my fellow citizens. You will understand that, for me, Ontario – and in particular French-speaking Ontario – is my whole life.

OHT: To what extent was your choice of career influenced by your heritage? And what has it been like, being a francophone in cabinet?

MM: While I have very fond memories of the time I was studying to be a nurse, my career path changed. I went on to study law at the University of Ottawa, and then went into municipal politics.

I may be the only francophone in cabinet, but there are a lot of francophiles! Many of the ministers are fully bilingual, including Premier Dalton McGuinty. I have the good fortune to work with colleagues who respect, admire and try to do everything possible to promote our francophone communities.

The Office of Francophone Affairs portfolio is complex because it cuts across all the other ministries. And so knowing that I can count on my colleagues in our efforts to support, defend and strengthen francophone rights is a definite and necessary advantage.

OHT: What are some of the challenges that the francophone community in Ontario still faces? What are some of the opportunities that could come out of these challenges?

MM: There is no doubt that the main challenge for the Franco-Ontarian community is linguistic assimilation. Although Ontario's is the second-largest francophone community after Quebec, and accounts for more than half of all Canadians with a French background who live outside Quebec, there is no getting around the fact that, in North America, the Franco-Ontarian community is swimming in an anglophone ocean.

What's more, the attraction of American culture is a constant reality and remains, even for English Canada, an enormous challenge if we want to hold back the phenomenon of cultural assimilation.

That said, the French language continues to be very much alive in the province, in the country and internationally. There are many opportunities in French in many sectors, including business. It's a matter of seizing those opportunities.

From a government point of view, I think we have made tremendous progress in the past few years with regard to meeting the objectives of the French Language Services Act.

In my opinion, Ontario is better equipped today to meet the needs of francophones in the key sectors of education, health, law, social services, culture and politics.

OHT: For the coming years, what role do you see the provincial government playing in promoting Franco-Ontarian identity and culture, and in supporting francophone communities across Ontario?

MM: One of the key projects that will promote Franco-Ontarian identity and culture and support our Franco-Ontarian communities is the commemoration of 400 years of French presence in Ontario. The government recognizes the contribution of Ontario's francophones and sees the 400th anniversary of Champlain's travels in Ontario and the French presence here as the perfect occasion to celebrate 400 years of francophone history and culture.

The province is looking at holding the official 400-year commemorations in the summer of 2015, possibly beginning during the Pan Am Games in Toronto.

OHT: In your opinion, what role can francophone youth play in the development of Franco-Ontarian identity and community in the 21st century?

MM: Our young people are our future; they are essential to developing the identity of the Franco-Ontarian community of tomorrow. That's why it's important for each generation to know when it's time to let go of the reins and pass the torch to the next generation.

Unfortunately, however, there is a significant risk of Franco-Ontarian youth becoming disengaged from their culture and language. This phenomenon is aggravated by the constant threat of assimilation in a minority situation. This is why the government has launched a youth strategy to encourage young Franco-Ontarians to participate in their communities and to reinforce their sense of belonging.

OHT: Do you have a special message to send out to our readers?

MM: Absolutely. A few messages in fact.

First, a message of pride in our shared heritage and this language that, generation after generation, continues to connect us to one another.

A message of mobilization next, for everyone at their own level to keep living their daily lives in French in Ontario.

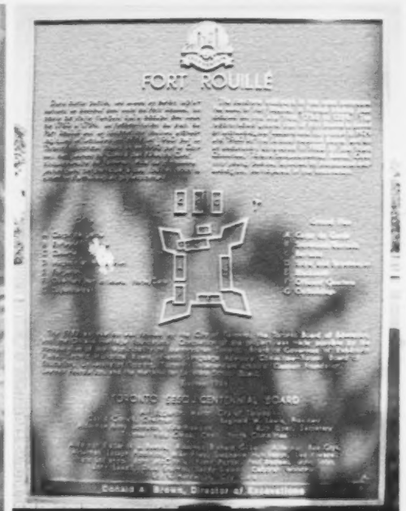
And, finally, a message of confidence that our francophone identity is changing, evolving, adapting, but more than ever it continues to define the future of our society.

To read the full interview, visit www.heritagetrust.on.ca/hm-feature, or snap this tag:

THE EARLY FRENCH EXPERIENCE IN ONTARIO

By Gratien Allaire

Pioneers of Penetanguishene. A group of voyageurs – Lewis Solomon, John Bussette, James Laramee and Francis Dusome – from an 1895 photograph (Source: A.C. Osborne, The Migration of the Voyageurs from Drummond Island to Penetanguishene in 1828, Toronto, Ontario Historical Society Papers and Records, 1901).



Historical plaque of Fort Rouillé, Toronto. Fort Rouillé, a trade and military post, formed with Fort Frontenac, Fort Niagara and others the French line of defence against the Thirteen Colonies and England. Built in 1750-51, it was destroyed by its garrison in 1759, during the War of the Conquest (Photo: Alan L Brown).

The French came to present-day Ontario as early as 1610, and *Canadiens* (descendants of French colonists) were established in three areas by 1840. The story began with a First Nation alliance and a Roman Catholic mission, developed with official exploration and the fur trade, and continued with agriculture and permanent settlement.

An alliance and a mission

When Champlain established his Quebec *habitation*, he formed a military alliance with the Wendat (Hurons) of Georgian Bay. An employee of a fur trade monopoly, Champlain needed their support to maintain a steady supply of furs. He sent Étienne Brûlé to their villages in 1610 to gather information and learn their language. Champlain himself wintered in Wendake in 1615-16.

Information was also obtained through missionaries sent by counter-reformation France, and Recollets visited the sedentary Wendat. But the Jesuits, wanting to ensure a steady presence among them, built Sainte-Marie-among-the-Hurons and made it into a fortified village to house an increasing number of converted Wendat. Envious of the middleman role of the Wendat in the fur trade, the Five Nations Confederacy attacked and destroyed Wendake in 1648-49. The Jesuits were forced to demolish their own installations and flee with their converts, wintering on St. Joseph Island and then moving to the Quebec City area. Yet missionary work continued, but together with the fur trade.

Exploration and the fur trade

The French depended on the fur trade. With a dwindled supply after the turmoil created by the Confederacy, they developed a new strategy: travelling to the up-country to obtain furs.

In 1659-60, Pierre-Esprit Radisson and his brother-in-law successfully ventured to Lake Superior. Callously treated by the authorities, they went to England where their know-how led to the creation of the Hudson's Bay Company. The company's posts on James Bay and Hudson Bay were captured by expeditions from Quebec. Recovered by the English and captured again by the French, the posts were finally surrendered to the English in 1713.

Increased interest in the Great Lakes area also resulted in expeditions to take possession of the region for the French king. Military officers allied with First Nations and built posts around the lakes. Closed in 1696 in an attempt to curb the supply of beaver pelts, trade was re-established. Detroit was built in 1701, Michillimackinac restored in 1717 and others afterwards. Official exploration, supported by French imperial ambitions and financed by the fur trade, contributed to further expansion after 1731, when Pierre Gaultier de La Vérendrye built posts on Rainy Lake and Lake of the Woods for his search for the western sea and a transcontinental route to Asia.

After the Conquest (1760), Scottish and English Montreal merchants took over the fur trade, their companies and later the powerful North West Company adopting the French trade methods and organisation. With the Loyalist settlement of the peninsula, the fur trade lost its significance for the peninsula, leaving only the Ottawa River-French River-Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence-Great Lakes waterways as highways to the northwest and the Upper Mississippi.

Agricultural settlement

The French, no doubt, practised agriculture early in present-day Ontario. This was certainly the case at Fort Frontenac as early as the 1670s. Agricultural settlement, however, began at Fort Pontchartrain in Detroit. Initially a fur trade post, it attracted the First Nations. Fur traders, soldiers and tradesmen also came, as did others with their families. Land had been granted since 1734 and the mission transformed into a parish, Assomption, in 1767. The *Canadiens* had established a colonial society, about 3,000 strong, on the shores of the Detroit River.

Detroit was transferred to the United States in 1783, but the settlement on the British side of the Detroit River became part of Upper Canada on its creation in 1791. Several French settlers, such as the Baby family, participated actively in Upper Canadian politics. The *Canadien* population of the Essex and Kent area reached 4,500 by 1837. Schools were established, and parishes and other institutions were added to create an active community.

Another successful settlement – this time in the Penetanguishene area, a military and naval base southeast of Georgian Bay – began in 1828 when 75 Métis voyageur families moved there from Drummond Island with the British garrison. They were joined in the 1840s by *Canadiens* mostly from the Montreal area. Forest and sawmill operations later became their main activity.

After 1810, following the establishment of British preferential tariffs for North American timber, the Ottawa Valley became another area of *Canadien* settlement, when thousands migrated to work in lumber camps. In the 1820s and early 1830s, *Canadien* foresters and raftsmen – including the legendary Joseph Montferrand – fought with Irish workers over the control of the timber operations. Many settled permanently, along with habitants moving from overcrowded seigniorial lands in western Lower Canada. They were the first wave of what would become a large movement to eastern Ontario.

Francophone presence

When Upper and Lower Canada formed a united Canada in 1841, *Canadiens* were solidly established in three areas of Upper Canada: south of Lake St. Clair in the Assomption area, southeast of Georgian Bay in the Penetanguishene area, and south of the Ottawa Valley in the Bytown area. Other *Canadiens* left the overpopulated seigniorial lands of the St Lawrence Valley to join them. These varied factors all contributed to the establishment of a robust francophone presence in Ontario.

Gratien Allaire is Professor Emeritus at Laurentian University of Sudbury.

Choosing sides: French presence on the Detroit frontier during the War of 1812

By Guillaume Teasdale

Battles of the War of 1812, waged on the Detroit frontier, had a significant impact on the lives of the predominantly French settlers of the area. When Britain surrendered Michigan to the United States in 1796, the Detroit River became a border between Upper Canada and what would be known by 1805 as Michigan Territory.

In southwest Upper Canada, authorities created Essex County in 1792 – although its limits were changed in 1800 to include the south shore of the Detroit River – while, across the border, the American government created Wayne County in 1796. Until 1817, Wayne County was Michigan's only county and it included all of the Lower Peninsula.

In 1812, about 6,500 European-Americans inhabited the Detroit River region, more than half of whom resided on the American side. About 700 lived within Fort Detroit, while fewer than 300 lived in the towns of Sandwich and Amherstburg. The rest of the population resided in agricultural settlements that French settlers from present-day Quebec had established on both sides of the Detroit River. When the War of 1812 began, these French settlers comprised the majority of the European-American population of both Essex and Wayne counties. In an instant, members of the same French community went from being neighbours to combatants with divided allegiances.

During the War of 1812, the Essex County militia was divided into two regiments. Frenchmen represented half of the privates of the First Regiment and virtually all of the Second Regiment. Names like Boucher, Campeau, Duchesne, Laframboise, Meloche, Nadeau, Pillette, Réaume and Tremblay appear in the Essex militia.

In the southeast portion of Michigan Territory, the Wayne County militia was also divided into two regiments – and most of their captains, lieutenants and privates were also French. In addition, dozens of Frenchmen from Wayne County served as spies for the United States because of their knowledge of the region and its Native peoples.

Frenchmen of the Essex and Wayne militia met on the battlefield on several occasions during the War of 1812, most notably at the Battle of Frenchtown (January 22, 1813 in Michigan – a British victory) and at the Siege of Fort Meigs (April 28-May 9, 1813 in Ohio – an American victory).

Casualties among the French settlers of Essex and Wayne counties were small compared to British and American soldiers. Still, several Frenchmen were killed during the War of 1812. Beyond these casualties, most French settlers on the Detroit frontier suffered immensely from the destruction of their properties and the killing of their livestock. It took several years for these French settlers to recover from losses inflicted during the War of 1812.

Guillaume Teasdale is a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Post-Doctoral Fellow in the Centre for Research on French Canadian Culture at the University of Ottawa.

'In the words of Laurent Durocher, "after the defeat of Winchester, many of the inhabitants fled with their families to the frontier of Ohio. Others went to Detroit. The British made several attempts to persuade the Indians to destroy what was left of the settlement at the River Raisin, but the Potawatomies protested and declared they . . . had given the land to the first settlers, and had been compensated therefore . . . and would not suffer them to be disturbed in their habitations."

In October of 1813, the inhabitants of Michigan Territory returned the favor by interceding on behalf of those Native-Americans who wished to negotiate an armistice with the American military authorities in Detroit, so they could return to their villages and live in peace with their neighbors.'

Plaque at the River Raisin National Battlefield Park in Monroe, Michigan. The Battle of Frenchtown, also know as the Battle of the River Raisin, was a series of conflicts that took place during the War of 1812. (Photo: Guillaume Teasdale)

Developing communities: French-Canadian settlement in Ontario

By Yves Frenette

In 1840, as Upper Canada was about to become Canada West, a grand migratory movement began from the neighbouring colony of Canada East (Quebec). The francophone enclaves in Essex, Georgian Bay and the Bytown (Ottawa) region were strengthened, and new areas were opened up to settlement by French Canadians.

The Catholic Church played a key role in this process. In 1849, the first Bishop of Bytown (Ottawa), Monsignor Bruno Guigues, founded a settlement society and became its first president. To counteract Protestant influence, he encouraged young people from Canada East to acquire plots of land along the Ottawa River, between Rigaud and Bytown, where francophone families were already living, spread over a wide area.

The family of Simon Aumont. Only Simon himself and Irène (seated, holding a doll), survived the great fire that devastated the region in 1916, Val Gagné (Ontario), [before 1916]. University of Ottawa Centre for Research on French Canadian Culture, TVOntario archive (C21), reproduced from the collection of Germaine Robert, Val Gagné, Ontario.

Most of the new arrivals came from western Quebec, prompted by promotional campaigns there. In their minds, they were merely pushing a bit farther west to settle, as their parents and grandparents had done before them. They often moved onto poor-quality land that had been abandoned by English-speaking farmers.

Soon, Prescott and Russell counties had francophone majorities. Arriving with little capital, the migrants could only afford small farms at first, 20 hectares on average, and the land became poorer each year under the effects of intensive exploitation. Moreover, the French-Canadian farmers in eastern Ontario did not see any advantage in owning a large plot or mechanizing their operation, since, as they had done in Quebec, they spent part of each year off their land, working in forestry to earn essential extra income. With some variations, their compatriots in southwestern Ontario and Georgian Bay were doing the same. In all three regions, the turn of the century saw a transition to the dairy industry. Still, farming for subsistence and to supply workers in the forestry industry persisted.

French Canadians were also found in the province's industrial centres, including Toronto, where Sacré-Cœur parish had 130 families when it was founded in 1887, and Cornwall, where the migrants worked in the textile and pulp and paper industries. As for Ottawa, which became Canada's capital in 1867 and was a small industrial centre, it attracted civil servants, professionals, craftsmen, tradesmen and labourers from the regions of Quebec City, Montreal and Trois-Rivières. By 1910, Ottawa was home to 23,000 French Canadians, representing nearly a quarter of its population.

It was in the northern part of the province, though, that the early 20th-century emergence of a French-Canadian proletariat was most pronounced – as railways were built, mines and pulp mills were established and hydro-electric power was developed. As in the province next door, the Church advocated settlement of the North, a veritable promised land. The migrants came mainly from eastern Ontario, the Montreal area and western Quebec, but there were also contingents from the lower St. Lawrence. The clay-based soils were poor, the summer short and the markets far away, and the settlers quickly reproduced a way of life based on a combination of subsistence agriculture and work in the mines and forests, or on commercial agriculture to supply the resource industry worksites. Others moved into company towns

Typical scene from the early stages of a family's life as settlers in Northern Ontario, Val Gagné, Ontario, c. 1912. Joseph Aumont, a farmer originally from the Joliette area, his wife and their three eldest children, Gabrielle, Albert and Rita; Léa and Edouard Aumont of the Ludger Aumont family; François, son of Simon Aumont. University of Ottawa Centre for Research on French Canadian Culture, TVOntario archive (C21), reproduced from the collection of Germaine Robert, Val Gagné, Ontario

The Lamontagne family, one of many families that left Sault-Montmorency, Québec to work at the Empire Cotton Mill in Welland. Mr. Lamontagne was the foreman of the loom tuners. Welland, Ontario [between 1918 and 1930]. University of Ottawa Centre for Research on French Canadian Culture, TVOntario archive (C21), reproduced from the Lamontagne collection, Welland, Ontario

where they provided an unskilled workforce. Railways were also important employers of French Canadians. Nearly all 8,000 workers on the Canadian Pacific in the Sudbury region belonged to this group.

Thanks to these migrations and to a high birth rate, the French-Canadian population in Ontario grew from 13,969 in 1842 to 248,275 by 1921. Although they made up only 8.5 per cent of the province's population that year, their geographic concentration made them extremely visible in certain areas. This was enough to lead some segments of the anglophone majority to raise alarms about a French Catholic invasion, which, in turn, played a large role in generating the great language conflict that shook Ontario in the first two decades of the 20th century.

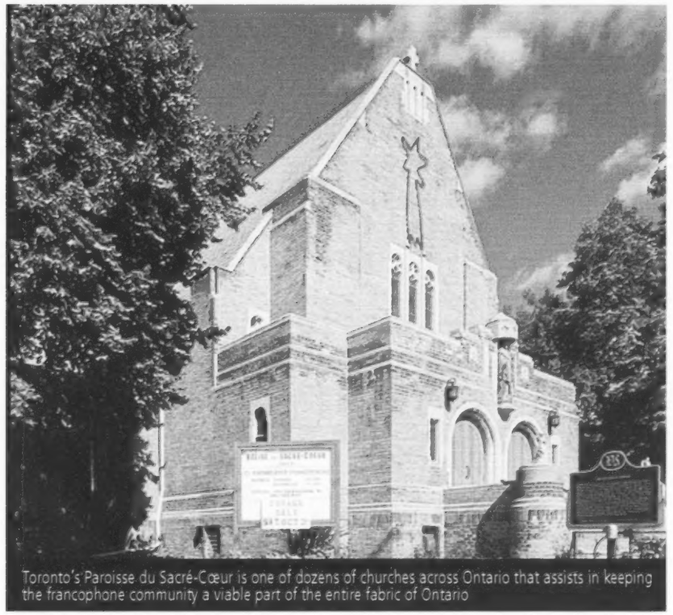
Yves Frenette is a professor at the University of Ottawa's Institute of Canadian Studies.

William Franche seated on a horse-drawn reaper, commonly called "le moulin à foin" (the hay mill) in Wendover, Ontario, 1913. University of Ottawa Centre for Research on French Canadian Culture, La Ste-Famille (Holy Family) Cultural Centre Collection (C80), reproduced from the collection of Rose Demers, Wendover, Ontario

Keeping the faith:

The Church and French Ontario

By Serge Dupuis



Toronto's Paroisse du Sacré-Cœur is one of dozens of churches across Ontario that assists in keeping the francophone community a viable part of the entire fabric of Ontario

The arrival of the Catholic Church in modern-day Ontario can be traced back to New France with the establishment of the missions of Sainte-Marie-among-the-Hurons in 1641 and L'Assomption in 1744.

As was the case for all newly established francophone communities, the Church represented the pivotal point of community and family life. When thousands of French-Canadians settled in eastern and mid-northern Ontario in the second half of the 19th century, recently arrived Irish Catholics in these regions quickly became a minority in their parishes and schools. Both began to offer services in French and English.

As early linguistic tensions mounted, Ottawa Bishop Bruno Guigues encouraged the Irish to settle in the Ottawa Valley to the west and French-Canadians in the counties of Prescott, Russell, Glengarry and Carleton to the east. Despite the calls by the English-speaking clergy to make English the language of Catholicism in North America, the French-Canadian elite argued that, as its people were practically all Catholic, abolishing French-language parishes and schools would eliminate the Church's competitive advantage over Protestant churches.

Pragmatism allowed for the opening of French-language parishes and schools where the number of parishioners justified it. As the number of French-Canadians increased (100,000 in 1881 and 200,000 in 1911), so did the hostility from English-speaking Catholics who perceived them as a threat to their legitimacy on Ontario soil.

The Orange Order – a Protestant fraternal organization – opposed both the importation of French and Catholicism in the Loyalist province, and the Irish seemed willing to sacrifice French in order to save separate schools. Clergymen such as London Bishop Michael Fallon fiercely fought for the Anglicization of schools and parishes in the 1910s, but the Vatican ultimately instructed Ontario bishops to stay out of this political debate, and acknowledge French Canadians hoping to fight off assimilation. Hostility toward French-language education galvanized parents and brought them to use religious organizations to advance the development of their institutions.

Language and faith formed a continuum in French Canada. They mutually protected each other's minority status on the continent. Catholicism, along with the French language, prevented these citizens from integrating the ethnic mosaic of Ontario. Franco-Ontarians considered French and Catholicism as equal partners in Confederation along with English and Protestantism.

But as religious practice declined and a more assertive nationalism emerged after the First World War, language became the primary distinguishing factor between individuals. It is therefore a paradox in French Ontario that Catholicism (still the majority's faith) has come to divide the community internally as distinct public and Catholic French-language school systems were established in the 1970s and 1980s. Competition for student enrolment has led to the expression of two forms of Franco-Ontarian identities: one secularized and language-based, the other more traditionally Franco-Catholic. The Church remains, in many ways, an unavoidable element of French Ontario's past and present.

Serge Dupuis is a PhD candidate in the Department of History at the University of Waterloo.

Contemporary immigration of francophones to Ontario

By Dr. Amal Madibbo

Ontario francophone communities are becoming increasingly diverse as significant numbers of immigrants move from various parts of the world – including Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, the Middle East and Europe. Among Ontario's 578,040 francophones, 60 per cent were born in the province, 20 per cent in Québec, and about 14 per cent outside Canada.

While European immigration has generally preceded that of visible minorities, the latter constitutes a large proportion of the immigrant population. These immigrants are particularly concentrated in large urban centres, including Toronto and Ottawa, but are also found in smaller cities such as Hamilton, Windsor and Sudbury.

Immigrants have contributed to the transformation of francophone communities, creating spaces that are vibrant with ethnic and racial diversity and cultural fusion. They help to counter cultural and linguistic assimilation by boosting the number of francophones and enhancing the retention of the French language.

Immigrants aspire to establish themselves, expand economic opportunities for themselves and their children, and contribute to the social, political and economic life of their host society. Linguistic discrimination and racism, however, hinder their integration and inclusion and weaken their sense of belonging.

They face the challenges of living in a predominantly anglophone environment and coping with the lack of appropriate services in French. Moreover, notwithstanding their high level of education, visible minorities face challenges in terms of exclusion from employment, poverty and under-representation in mainstream institutions. Nevertheless, they mobilize existing societal resources to integrate better into society and strengthen identity and belonging. They participate in francophone organizations and have also created their own structures that consist of community associations, groups of artists and musicians, media, churches and organizations of women and youth.

All of these urban groups play crucial roles in voicing social differences among francophones, supporting community development, fighting racism, defending the rights of community members and facilitating integration. These groups initiate various ties among francophone immigrants and with other francophone and anglophone communities. Additionally, various connections are developed with communities in the Diaspora enhancing trans-national links within and beyond the international francophone space.

Students of Toronto's École élémentaire catholique Saint-Jean-de-Lalande, celebrating International Francophonie Day on March 23, 2012. (Source: Journal Canora, Toronto)

To achieve these goals, organizations – such as Canora Inc. in Toronto, la Communauté tchadienne de Hamilton, le Centre Afro-Canadien d'Échange Social in Windsor, le Contact interculturel francophone de Sudbury, and le Mouvement Ontarien des Femmes Immigrantes Francophones in Ottawa – offer activities that enhance training and social services, partnership and economic development through entrepreneurship, and the promotion of arts and culture and anti-discriminatory strategies.

The general francophone community in large cities is blooming at various spheres of life. The immigrant population, which is growing and becoming increasingly organized and visible, is strengthening the evolution of the urban francophonie in Ontario.

Dr. Amal Madibbo is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of Calgary. Her research is focused on francophone immigration to Canada, race and anti-racism, and race and ethnicity in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Portrait of a growing diversity

By Emanuel da Silva and Diane Farmer

Ontario has the largest number of francophones outside Québec. While that number has increased since 1951, it has not grown nearly as quickly as the number of anglophones or allophones and, subsequently, the proportion of francophones in Ontario has actually dropped.

Low birth rates, increased youth out-migration and an aging population create significant challenges for smaller francophone communities. The federal and provincial governments have made it a priority to increase francophones' demographic weight, in large part, through immigration. Outside Québec, the majority of francophone immigrants choose to settle in Ontario – specifically Toronto and Ottawa.

African dance troupe at a south-central Franco-Ontarian festival (Photo: Emanuel da Silva)

Yet two-thirds of Franco-Ontarians do not live in these metropolitan areas. The more bilingual of these two cities, our nation's capital, accounts for only 23 per cent of the province's francophones, while Toronto is home to almost nine per cent.

What we see, therefore, is a changing social and linguistic landscape where established francophone communities (largely of European descent) – historically rooted outside Canada's main metropolitan centres – are losing ground and jobs to larger, more mobile, diverse and multilingual (although still predominantly anglophone) metropolises that attract more immigrants and youth.

Much like the ethno-racial diversification of the Canadian population as a whole, Ontario's francophone communities are also diversifying, in large part, due to immigrants from across the world (not just from Europe, but also from Africa, Asia and the Middle East) and from internal migration within Canada. The 2001 census revealed that 10.3 per cent of Franco-Ontarians self-identified as racialized minorities and, in Toronto, that number stood as high as 25 per cent.

The evolution of urban francophone communities in Toronto and Ottawa – and changes in the new global economy – have complicated the national ideology of linguistic duality, which is at the core of French-language infrastructure established in Ontario during the 1960s and 1970s, with ethno-racial plurality challenging the historical identities, community formation and solidarity of rooted Franco-Ontarians.

These recent changes have led francophone communities to revisit their conceptions of identity, moving toward more inclusive approaches to citizenship. Institutions such as French-language schools are principal sites of interaction in which francophones of diverse backgrounds can coalesce.

Overall, immigration is at the forefront of developments in the area of French-language services. Yet, challenges remain. Greater support must be given to newcomers and their families to overcome systemic marginalization. Specific challenges include foreign credential recognition, racism, limited access to English-language training and availability of relevant French-language services, and insufficient support for comprehensive approaches to social and economic integration.

Emanuel da Silva is a Research Fellow at the Centre de recherches en éducation franco-ontarienne at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto. Diane Farmer is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology and Equity Studies in Education, and the Centre Head of the Centre de recherches en éducation franco-ontarienne at OISE, University of Toronto. They have prepared a report, through the National Metropolis Project (CIC) that looks at francophone immigration outside Quebec (visit http://canada.metropolis.net/pdfs/rapport_precongres2012_farmer_dasilva.pdf).

Prayers, petitions and protests: The controversy over Regulation 17

By Jack Cécillon

Meeting of the local French-Canadian priests of the area at the rectory of Our Lady of the Lake parish, later the scene of a riot. In the middle of the bottom row among the priests was Henri Bourassa, the famous French-Canadian nationalist leader from Montreal. (Source: Centre for Research on French Canadian Culture, University of Ottawa)

Students demonstrating against Regulation 17 outside Brébeuf School on Anglesea Square in Ottawa's Lowertown, in late January or early February, 1916 / [Le Droit, Ottawa]. University of Ottawa, Association canadienne-française de l'Ontario archive (C2), Ph2-142a.

Senator Gustave Lacasse speaks to a group of French Canadians in Tecumseh, Ontario, to protest the appointment in October 1918 of Fr. François Xavier Laurendeau as the new pastor of Our Lady of the Lake Parish in the Windsor suburb of Ford City. Fr. Laurendeau was suspected of being against the bilingual schools. (Source: Centre for Research on French Canadian Culture, University of Ottawa)

In 1912, after an inquiry into the state of Ontario's bilingual schools, the provincial government of Conservative Premier James Whitney introduced Regulation 17, placing tight new restrictions on the use of French as a language of instruction.

The provincial superintendent, Frederick Merchant, reported serious weaknesses in these schools – most notably the preponderance of unqualified instructors, many of whom could not even speak proper English. Regulation 17 restricted the use of French to the first two years of elementary school, while subsequent years eventually secured a one-hour daily lesson per classroom. Henceforth, English was to be the language of every classroom in the province.

This school regulation followed similar reforms in the Northwest Territories and Manitoba at the end of the 19th century. In an era of British imperialism, most English Canadians believed in Dalton McCarthy's vision for Canada of "One Language, One Flag and One Country."

The French-speaking communities of Ontario, however, did not accept this education reform quietly. In Ottawa, their leading cultural organization, the Association canadienne-française d'éducation de l'Ontario (ACFEO) urged its compatriots to resist the regulation. Teachers were encouraged to teach more than the prescribed hour of French, while parents instructed their children to march out of the schools on the arrival of the provincial school inspector, a Protestant, who they regarded as an intruder into their Catholic institutions.

In October 1913, when the inspector visited a school in the village of Pain Court, the children marched out of the school singing *O Canada*, preventing him from doing an adequate inspection. Similar scenarios occurred across the province, but not without consequences. In Tilbury, for example, when the inspector arrived at an empty school, he announced that the local board would not receive its annual provincial grant.

Emotions sometimes reached a boiling point and even led to acts of violence. For instance, during the 1914 provincial election campaign, when Conservative candidate Colonel Paul Poisson held a rally in McGregor, a group of young men screamed and yelled insults at Poisson from outside the hall. When that failed to disrupt the meeting, some of the men began hurling rocks through the windows. Amid the sounds of shattering glass, Poisson continued his speech defending the government's policy until one projectile – a rotten egg – came crashing down on his shoulder, bringing the rally to an abrupt end. Poisson lost the riding to a vocal critic of Regulation 17.

In 1916, at Ottawa's École Guigues, a group of mothers formed a human chain around their school to prevent the police from evicting two recalcitrant teachers. When the officers arrived, the women pulled out their long hairpins and kept the officers at bay.

The following year, in the Windsor suburb of Ford City, French-Canadian parishioners at Our Lady of the Lake Church formed a blockade and then rioted when police attempted to install a new pastor deemed to be an opponent of the bilingual schools and a supporter of Bishop Michael Francis Fallon. Fallon had publicly called for the elimination of the bilingual schools to protect the Catholic separate school system from its critics, becoming the enemy of French-Canadian nationalists everywhere. The Ford City riot led to nine arrests and 10 injuries, including two women in their 70s. The parishioners appealed to the Vatican to reverse the bishop's pastoral appointment, but to no avail; they were ordered to accept the priest in question or face excommunication. In October 1918, they relented, ending a year-long standoff.

Unlike most Franco-Ontarians, however, the majority of francophones in the Windsor border region willingly submitted to Regulation 17, after only modest protests. English was the language of the region, and children had a better chance of securing employment if their English language skills were solid.

Unlike the other communities of French Ontario, where the resistance experienced far greater success, only 10 of the region's 30 bilingual schools showed any meaningful signs of resistance against the school inspector. In 1926, Premier G. Howard Ferguson announced his plans to reform this school policy that had contributed to a national unity crisis. Still, Ferguson trumpeted that the Windsor border region represented the one shining example of Regulation 17's success, with inspectors praising the area's francophone children for their considerable fluency in spoken and written English.

The spirit of French-Canadian nationalism rooted in a careful preservation of the mother tongue did not override the parents' desire that their children master the English language, at least in southwestern Ontario.

Jack Cécillon is a lecturer at Glendon College (York University) in Toronto, as well as a teacher and guidance counsellor at St. Mary Catholic Secondary School.

Arts and culture in francophone Ontario

By Johanne Melançon

A scene from Le Chien, a play by Jean Marc Dalpé, from Théâtre du Nouvel-Ontario's 1987-88 season. Used with permission.

In the 19th century and the first half of the 20th, Ottawa was the centre of francophone cultural and literary life in Ontario. Live theatre performances by amateur troupes and companies from Quebec and France were common. Many civil servants were also writers. Short stories and folksongs provided a living catalogue of the culture. In 1948, Father Germain Lemieux of Sudbury began collecting these.

In the late 1960s, with the fracturing of the concept of French Canada, the francophone community in Ontario had to redefine its sense of cultural identity. In 1970, a Franco-Ontarian Office was created within the Ontario Arts Council.

Sudbury was in full artistic and counter-cultural effervescence with the Serene Revolution. In February 1971, a Laurentian University troupe presented a collective work entitled *Moi, j'viens du Nord, 'stie!*, a multimedia and musical performance. The young performers hoped that the audience would identify with both the subject and the language of the stage show. That summer, the Théâtre du Nouvel-Ontario was founded. The following year saw the birth of the Coopérative des artistes du Nouvel-Ontario, which would give rise to the Prise de parole publishing house (1973), the band Cano Musique (1975) and the art gallery, Galerie du Nouvel-Ontario (1976).

The performing arts were at the forefront of artistic and cultural expression in the 1970s. Théâtre-action (1972) organized a festival of school theatre and a festival for community theatre groups and, in 1978, created *Liaison*, a magazine of arts and culture. In the 1970s, three other troupes formed in the Ottawa area. In Sudbury, the Nuit sur l'étang festival began in 1973; described as "a Nocturnal Frenzy of Franco-Ontarian Partying," it became – and remains – an essential stage for songwriters. In addition, in La Cuisine de la poésie (the "poetry kitchen," 1975 79), poetry, music and singing went alongside critical and socially-engaged commentary. In Ottawa, the Festival franco-ontarien (1976) brought francophones together.

In literature, the boom came in the 1980s with new literary publishing houses. Poets, playwrights, novelists, short story writers and essayists were showcased at book fairs. Franco-Ontarian works, some of which would go on to win prestigious literary prizes, began to be studied in high schools and universities at the end of the 1970s.

Sometimes associated with Franco-Ontarians' demands for language rights, songwriting flourished with help from community radio, Radio-Canada, the Ontario Pop contest (1986), the Quand ça nous chante Festival in schools (2004), and the Prix Trille Or awards gala (2001). Visual artists and dramatic and documentary filmmakers also bore witness to the vitality of the arts in French-speaking Ontario. The public television network, TFO (1989), produced current affairs and information programming, as well as TV series for Franco-Ontarians.

Today, a number of Franco-Ontarian artists have reached national and international audiences, and their works are the reflection of a dynamic, modern community.

Johanne Melançon is an Associate Professor in the French Studies Department at Laurentian University. She has published numerous articles on Franco-Ontarian literature and song. She co-edited, with Lucie Hotte of the University of Ottawa, an Introduction à la littérature franco-ontarienne (Prise de parole, 2010).

Waving the flag

A conversation with Gaétan Gervais

Raising the Franco-Ontarian flag for the first time at the University of Ottawa, 1974. (Archives of the University of Ottawa, AUO-PHO-NB-6-1983-6).

In the 1970s, the Franco-Ontarian flag was created – not so much as a symbol against anyone or anything, but more so to create an emblem that would resonate among francophones.

In a conversation with Gaétan Gervais, Professor Emeritus at Laurentian University (and one of the people who helped create the flag), we learned more about how waving a flag has brought a community closer together – a community that is scattered throughout Ontario, from the eastern communities along the Quebec border to the francophones of southwestern Ontario in the Windsor and Welland areas, to our northern communities where Franco-Ontarian settlement has been historically established, and everywhere in between.

"Creating the flag met a need in the Franco-Ontarian community," said Gervais. "The minority felt it had lost its bearings with the rise of the new Québécois nationalism."

The Laurentian University francophone students' association, created in 1974, supported this need for emblems that both shaped and affirmed the community's identity.

"It started out as a small group thing and the flag took time to establish itself," recalls Gervais. "Symbols make an identity whole. We believed that if people wanted to assert themselves as Franco-Ontarian, they should be able to. There was not a lot of reaction; what feedback there was to the flag was mostly positive."

With this green and white flag established – green to represent the northern forests and white the winter snow – there was finally a unifying symbol that gained traction provincewide with various groups and regions.

"At first we only brought it out a few times a year," remembers Gervais. "We never expected it to be as popular as it turned out to be. We had hopes, obviously, but the flag's popularity confirmed that there was a use for it and that people would come together around it."

In the past 15 years, with the fight to save Montfort Hospital (1997), with the way the teachers have made it their own, and its recognition by Queen's Park as an official emblem in 2001, the Franco-Ontarian flag has taken flight.

"It's clear that the flag has connected with people," Gervais states. "It really struck a nerve."

Today, the flag has taken on a different role and meaning. It continues to be a symbol of Franco-Ontarian identity, but it also reminds everyone of our French heritage. The flag has made an impact, not because it was seen as an extension of the francophone population in Québec, or as a distinct minority group in Ontario, but as somewhere in between. In waving the flag, we are reminded of our past and united to keep that tradition alive.

Gaétan Gervais is Professor Emeritus in the Department of History at Laurentian University. The interview with M. Gervais was facilitated by Serge Dupuis, PhD candidate in the Department of History at the University of Waterloo.

Young francophones

By Michelle Lafleur

Michelle Lafleur celebrating Francophone Day at De La Salle high school

Michelle Lafleur has volunteered her time to work on Black History Month initiatives for the Haitian community in Ottawa since 2006. Recently, she devoted her time to Haitian earthquake relief efforts. She has also organized exhibitions of Haitian art and poetry, has led concerts and has participated in a multitude of cultural activities in her community.

It was an honour for me to receive the Lieutenant Governor's Youth Achievement Award for Ontario heritage conservation for 2011. And on top of that, to win the scholarship in celebration of the International Year for People of African Descent!

A prize like this represents a public recognition of citizens. It has made me realize that the little things we do have an impact on our community. Canada, in welcoming newcomers, encourages us to remember our own roots, by becoming a land of cultural diversity. It also encourages people to adapt to a new culture, and in my case, that meant Franco-Ontarian culture.

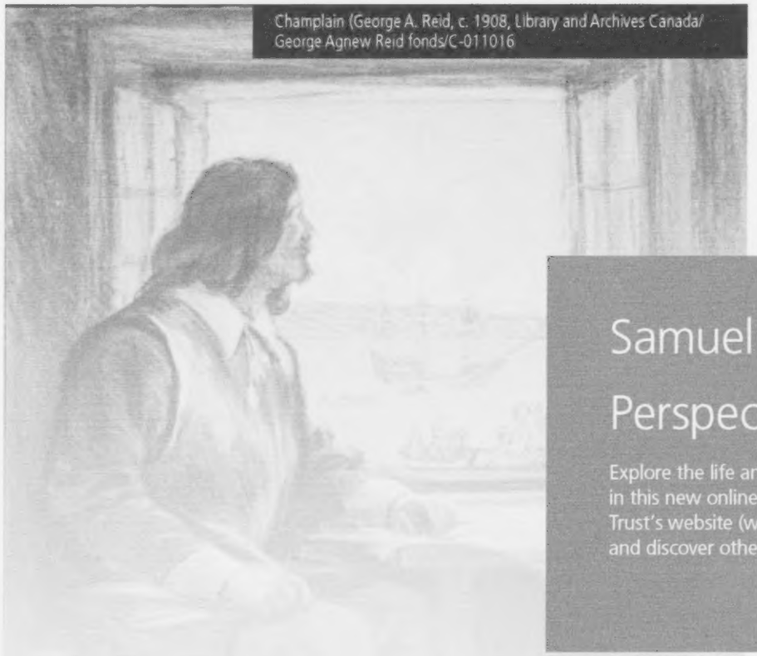
Being a young francophone in the nation's capital seems to be as much of a challenge as it is elsewhere in Ontario. We cannot always get service in our language. Yet French is one of this country's official languages. Canada was first colonized by the French. That said, France and the French language played a huge part in the founding of our country. It is good to know that we have not been forgotten.

The French language in Ontario has always been an interesting subject for me because I believe in this language, so colourful and richly textured. Franco-Ontarian culture represents a family for me. So many people have fought so that we could speak French. It's for this reason that I want to become a high school teacher. I want to make young people aware of what a privilege it is for us to speak French. Bilingualism is a strength that opens doors. So many anglophones wish they could speak French but cannot. Certainly, we francophones are still struggling for a more prominent place. But the fact that we have a place at all is enough for us to be grateful and proud of our heritage.

At the Lieutenant Governor's ceremony at Queen's Park, I was the only prizewinner whose description was read in both English and French. It made me realize that, as a francophone, I can make my mark everywhere I go. I am grateful to the Ontario Heritage Trust for giving me this award. No matter what our origins, our culture or our mother tongue may be, we all have our place in this great mosaic of Ontario and, even more, of Canada. But the most important thing is that young people have incredible potential and can play a tremendous part in the future and the conservation of Ontario's heritage. And to all those Ontario francophones who are still sleeping, it's time wake up. But to all those who have contributed to the flourishing of our Franco-Ontarian culture, I say thank you.

Michelle Lafleur was the 2011 winner of the Lieutenant Governor's Ontario Heritage Award for Youth Achievement in the category of Black Heritage and Culture, in celebration of the International Year for People of African Descent. She won the $2,000 scholarship in that category.

Web resources



Champlain (George A. Reid, c. 1908, Library and Archives Canada/ George Agnew Reid fonds/C-011016

Explore the Ontario Heritage Trust's Online Plaque Guide to learn more about francophone plaques throughout Ontario, and discover the people, places and events that have helped shape our province, our past and our future. Visit www.heritagetrust.on.ca/plaques for more information.

Samuel de Champlain: Perspectives

Explore the life and journeys of Samuel de Champlain in this new online exhibit on the Ontario Heritage Trust's website (www.heritagetrust.on.ca/champlain) and discover other web resources.

Government of Ontario: Office of Francophone Affairs (www.ofa.gov.on.ca)
Centre for Research on French Canadian Culture (www.crccf.uottawa.ca)
Centre for Franco-Ontarian Studies (CRÉFO) (www.oise.utoronto.ca/crefo)
Le Centre franco-ontarien de folklore (www.cfof.on.ca)
Office of the French Language Services Commissioner (www.flsc.gov.on.ca)
Métis Nation of Ontario (www.metisnation.org)
L'Inventaire des lieux de mémoire de la Nouvelle-France (www.memoirenf.cieq.ulaval.ca)
Centre franco-ontarien de ressources pédagogiques (CFORP) (www.cforp.on.ca)
Réseau du patrimoine franco-ontarien (RPFO) (www.rpfo.ca)
Association canadienne-française de l'Ontario (ACFO)
- **Ottawa** – www.acfoottawa.ca
- **London-Sarnia Regional Council** – www.acfo-ls.org
- **Sudbury** – www.acfosudbury.ca
- **Hamilton Region** – www.acfo-hamilton.on.ca
- **Prescott and Russell** – www.acfopr.com
- **Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry** – www.acfosdg.org
- **Thousand Islands Region** – www.acfomi.org
- **Windsor-Essex-Kent Region** – www.acfowindsor.ca

Fédération de la jeunesse franco-ontarienne (FESFO) (http://fesfo.ca/accueil.html)
Fédération des ainés et des retraités francophones de l'Ontario (FAFO) (www.fafo.on.ca)
La Clé d'la Baie (www.lacle.ca)
La Société d'Histoire de Toronto (http://www.sht.ca)
Festival franco-ontarien (www.ffo.ca)
Franco-Fête (www.franco-fete.ca)
L'Association des auteures et des auteurs de l'Ontario français (AAOF) (http://aaof.ca)
Association des professionnels de la chanson et de la musique (APCM) (www.apcm.ca/fr)
Bureau du regroupement des artistes visuels de l'Ontario (BRAVO) (www.bravoart.org/index.php)
Réseau Ontario, a network for the promotion and distribution of Francophone events (http://reseauontario.ca)
Profils des communautés francophones et acadiennes du Canada (http://profils.fcfa.ca/fr/Apercu_313)
Mouvement des Intervenant.e.s en Communication Radio de l'Ontario (Ontario Stakeholders in Community Radio Communications) (www.microontario.ca/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=13)
L'Alliance culturelle de l'Ontario (http://allianceculturelle.org)
Bottin franco-ontarien (Franco-Ontarian Directory) (www.monassemblee.ca/fr/Bottin_Francoontarien_35)
L'Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario (www.monassemblee.ca/fr)

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Photo: Fulford Place, Brockville

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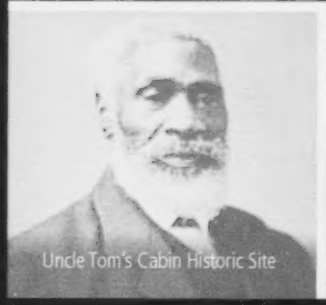
Uncle Tom's Cabin Historic Site

Inge-Va

Photo: David Lee
Parliament interpretive centre

Barnum House